Sample Staffing Guidelines for On-Site Production

Number of Meal Equivalents	Meals per Labor Hour (conventional systems)	Total Hours of labor per day	Meals per Labor Hour (convenience systems)	Total Hours of labor per day
Up to 100	8	9-12	9	9-11
101-150	9	12-16	10	11-14
151-200	10-11	16-17	12	14-16
201-250	12	17-20	14	16-18
251-300	13	20-22	15	18-20
301-400	14	22-29	16	20-25
401-500	14	35-40	18	25-28
501-600	15	40-43	18	28-34
601-700	16	40-43	19	34-37
701-800	17	43-47	20	37-40
+008	18	47+	21+	40+

In school food service programs, the production of meals in a specified period of time is a unit of measure used to gauge the effectiveness and efficiency of a school food service program. The required labor per meal equivalent can help determine meal cost, labor staffing (meals per labor hour) or labor efficiency/benchmarks. This chart is a good estimate of labor requirements for school meals programs. "Conventional" systems produce more foods from scratch and require more labor per meal equivalent that "convenience" systems, in which more heat-and-serve items are used. Other variables, such as equipment availability, kitchen layout and staff skills will also affect labor requirements.

To utilize the chart, all meals and other food served must be converted to <u>meal equivalents</u>. The meal equivalent is a statistical tool used to convert all meals and cash sales to a standard unit of production, in this case a reimbursable student lunch. It is not a unit of production, but it allows SFAs to equate all meals and other sales to a standard. This method for converting student breakfasts and snacks, adult meals and cash sales to meal equivalents has been developed by the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) and is used nationally.

Adult meals may be either counted as meals on the same basis as student meals or as cash sales but not both. The Federal free meal lunch reimbursement rate and the cash value of commodity support per meal are required to complete the calculation. The Federal free reimbursement rates are available at http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/notices/naps/NAPs.htm and the current commodity support rate at http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/regs/mealrates.htm.

In making comparisons between labor expended and meal equivalents produced, it is CRITICAL that the same period of time be prepared (a week, a month, a year). Calculations on a daily basis are probably not good evaluation tools, due to variations in participation or cash sales. Comparisons between SFAs or buildings within SFAs must be made with consideration for menus complexity, equipment, staff skill, participation levels, etc.

The formula is:

Meal Equivalents = lunches + (2/3 * breakfasts) + (1/3 * snacks) + [cash sales ÷ (Federal free meal lunch reimbursement + current commodity support per meal)]

An Excel spreadsheet calculator is available from program consultants.